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➤BOOK ❖ NOTICES.◀

LYON'S ASSYRIAN MANUAL.*

It is now pretty generally admitted that some knowledge of the Assyrian language is necessary to every Semitic specialist, and of prime importance in the work of Old Testament interpretation. Indeed, such strides have been made within thirty years in the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, and such light has been thrown by this means upon the fortunes and literatures of the ancient Semitic peoples, that students of these can no longer, with any sort of justice, allude disparagingly to the wide divergence of opinion among Assyriologists, and make the consequent uncertainty and difficulty the excuse for failure to undertake the study of Assyrian. As substantial agreement has been reached as to the principles by which Assyrian is to be deciphered and interpreted as we can hope to reach in the pursuit of any science whatever; and, as our knowledge of the Assyrian vocabulary shall improve, we may hope to see further uncertainties in regard to the values of the cuneiform signs gradually vanish, until there shall remain nothing but an insignificant minimum to remind us that there could once have been great difficulty arising from the various values of the signs.

The difficulties which have of late encompassed a beginner's path are well stated by Dr. Lyon in the preface to his *Assyrian Manual*, as follows: "Two great obstacles have stood in the way of those who desire to become acquainted with the language,—the lack of suitable books for beginners, and the large demand made on the memory for the acquisition of the cuneiform signs." It is safe to say that the labor of memory needed to acquire the signs would never prove irksome enough to drive scholars from the field. There remained, then, the lack of proper books for beginners.

And Dr. Lyon has taken a great step in removing this reproach from the door of the Assyriologists. Observing to what degree the acquisition of the signs has been complicated for beginners by their meager knowledge of the linguistic peculiarities to be expected, he has set before himself the problem of teaching the language through transliterated texts prior to any very close study of the originals or large practice with the signs. And therefore, in his selections for reading, he has given forty-seven pages to these texts against twelve in the cuneiform character. At the same time, for a gradual and pleasant introduction to the original, he has given five tables of signs to be used with the cuneiform selections and in preparing brief exercises. These tables offer, (1) a list of 287 Phonograms, giving all except very rare syllabic values, (2) a selected list of the ninety-two syllabic signs used most frequently, (3) twenty-four Determinatives, (4) 372 Ideograms, or ideographic combinations, including all used in the texts employed in the work, (5) the signs used for numerals when written ideographically. The *Outline of Gram-*

* AN ASSYRIAN MANUAL, for the use of Beginners in the study of the Assyrian language. By D. G. Lyon, Professor in Harvard University. Chicago: *The American Publication Society of Hebrew*. 1886. 8vo, cloth, pp. xlv, 138. Price, \$4.00.

mar contains twenty pages, the Notes thirty, and the Glossary forty-three, all in *brevier* type, forty lines to the page, against the fifty-nine pages of text in *small pica* and *cuneiform*, thirty-four lines and less to the page. The Glossary has the advantage over the *Lehestücke* of Delitzsch, and other books, in containing all the words found in the passages to be read (often under both the initial letter of root and that of derived word), as well as in being almost complete as a concordance to these passages. The labor involved in this valuable feature must have been very great. The Notes, while containing chiefly grammatical material, have such historical information as will throw light on obscure passages, and such references to the original as will make clear the author's preference in the case of doubtful readings, or which will explain the doubt. Nearly all the syntax offered is contained in these Notes.

As illustrating the progress which has been made in Assyrian study, it is interesting to note that, in the forty-seven pages of transliterated texts, there are but thirty-one ideograms and twenty-three syllables marked as doubtful, in some of these cases, even, the *meaning* being perfectly clear. For a few other words, the Notes offer different possibilities; but these are due chiefly to mutilations in the original. So the Glossary contains, for the fifty-nine pages of text, seventy-three words not defined at all, five words whose correct transliteration and meaning are uncertain, ninety-two whose meaning is not quite certain, nineteen whose roots are doubtful, though the meanings are not, and twenty-nine which, while not absolutely certain, are brought within very narrow limits of uncertainty; as, *šumbu a kind of wagon*, *šippatu a kind of reed*.

Probably the book will prove most serviceable in the hands of those who follow substantially the author's idea of the proper use of it, in his advice to beginners. After a thorough reading of the Grammar, he would have them begin with a certain five-page selection in transliterated form, opposite which he has had printed, in parallel pages, a word-for-word translation into English, and for which he has furnished very full notes with frequent references to the Grammar; and he gives minute directions as to the method here to be employed. At the same time, the student should commit each day a few of the selected Phonograms, and practice those learned by writing them and pointing them out in the cuneiform texts. After this, the selections should be taken up in the order of less to more difficult. Meanwhile, after some familiarity with Assyrian roots, the cuneiform selection of four and a half pages, already studied in transliteration, should be mastered, and then the remainder of the cuneiform; it being desirable also, as the student works on the transliterations, to make constant reference to the originals, in order to become familiar with the signs and methods of grouping them. As Dr. Lyon says, "Long before the student has accomplished all that is here marked out, he will be delighted to find that, if he is tolerably familiar with the list of signs, he will be in a position to translate, with a good deal of confidence, untransliterated historical texts."

There are few aspects in which this *Manual* is open to adverse criticism, and these are doubtless all incident to the pioneer character of the author's work. Some scholars will consider it a pity that the Outline of Grammar was not made fuller, particularly in the line of examples, and more systematic, even at the risk of approaching the analysis of other authors. This will occur to them especially in connection with the section on Phonic Changes and in those on verbs. The former might be retained in the memory somewhat more easily had the examples

been grouped under the old heads of Assimilation, Rejection, Addition and Commutation. The distinction between weak and weakest gutturals is not quite emphatic enough in § 27 to overcome the impression received by § 7. 2; nor are the cases of vowels retained after loss of a guttural (or changed to *i*) quite clearly distinguished from cases where they are lost altogether or where the guttural is assimilated. Leaving the question open as to whether there were in Assyrian the vowels *ê* and *ô*, it hardly seems possible that *a+ʾ* could give *i*, as appears to be stated in § 30 (but see § 8. 1), without previous change of *ʾ* to *ʰ*. A larger number of examples brought under the phonic principles in the Grammar would have rendered somewhat clearer the circumstances in which weak letters are exchanged or contracted, and those in which they are lost altogether. In view of the examples given under § 8. 2. *c. d.*, the enquiry is worth making whether the vowelless letter is not in all the cases first assimilated, and then the *m* or *n* added to avoid a doubled consonant; the dissolution of doubling and use of *n* seem to be allowed in Note on 37¹³. The change of *t* to *d* after vowelless *g* noted on 18¹⁶ should find a place in § 8. of the Grammar. The Grammar might perhaps note in addition to the repetition of a consonant to indicate the accented syllable (§ 21. 3), and before suffixes (§ 9. 2), the same before *ma* (see Note on 42¹¹) and merely as orthographic variation (Note on 46¹⁸) and to mark a preceding vowel as long (Note to 42¹¹). It is gratifying to observe that *ašar* is not reckoned as a relative. It might perhaps have been stated in § 16. 2 that participles may form the masc. plur. in other endings than *ûti* (*ûtu*), for see Note on 7¹¹. So the occurrence of the noun in *u* for the construct is frequent enough, and is alluded to in Note on 19¹⁷ but is not mentioned in § 16. 4. Perhaps the declension of the first member of a compound, as seen in *šanimma* 19², *aḫinna* 46¹⁷ should somewhere have been noted. *Šattišam* 10²⁷ finds its only explanation in a note on 15²¹, where it would not be likely to be seen when wanted unless the attention were specially directed to it. In Note on 36²¹, a verbal form with final *u* in sing., even outside a relative sentence is recognized, and *išḫupu* 10²⁰, 12²³, 44⁸ and especially 10²⁵ when compared with *išḫup* 48²² may offer another example of it, though the Grammar seems to exclude the idea in § 24. 5. It is but occasionally that the author's method of using the type occasions even temporary uncertainty as to his meaning. So page 87, line 2, where the word "forward" occurs; page 97, line 30, where "or" separates two meanings, only one of which is allowable (cf. Note on 30³³), while on page 113, line 17, the two are allowable, and the proper one to be determined by a given context (cf. Note on 16²⁵). Only very rarely do the Notes show evidence of a change of view after the other portions of the book were prepared; thus *kisalla* 24¹⁶, 37²¹, 38¹⁵, 39¹⁷ should become, according to the Notes, *šamnu*; *išar* 20²⁶ defined in the Glossary as *thriving* would seem to have the meaning *abundance*, if we follow the translation given in the note. These points are perhaps too trivial to be noticed, at any rate they can easily be cared for in a second edition.

No one was better qualified than the author for undertaking such a work as this. For six years he has given the most of his time to Assyrian investigation. Nothing that has been written in this field has escaped him, though the method exposed in this volume is the elaboration of plans actually adopted and found to work in his own class-room. By this means, what it is safe to call the best Assyrian text-book for beginners (it is indeed the *first* really practical *introductory* book) has been made. For advanced classes, the book of Prof. Delitzsch will still

be needed even in this country; but for elementary instruction, it will doubtless be displaced here, and Dr. Lyon's book might very well be brought out abroad in German and French. Several instructors have already decided to use it with their classes. At Newton, where Assyrian has been introduced as one of the electives, and will be reckoned toward the required number of hours covering the full course, a class of three or four will this autumn begin to test the value of the work as a help in acquiring the language, and they expect to give the best part of their seventy-five hours of recitation to the material contained in this valuable *Manual*.

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LANSING'S ARABIC MANUAL.*

Aside from the intrinsic merits of this book, there are a number of reasons for giving it a warm welcome. It is a renewed indication that the revival of Semitic studies in America is widening and deepening; and an indication the nature and character of which is entitled to special notice. For the thoroughly scientific and philological study of the Semitic family of languages, and specifically also of the Hebrew, the Arabic must and will retain the fundamental position accorded to it by the history of the study of these languages. For the rational grammatical study of Semitic in general, and Hebrew in particular, the Arabic, by its very nature and genius, is entitled to the leading rank. And it is for the reason that those principles and factors which have controlled the growth and development of the Semitic languages, and which must be understood before a rational appreciation of the languages can be secured, find their best expression and development in the Arabic. It is true that some of the possibilities of Semitic expression of thought have, through the influence of the more flexible Greek, found a better development in Ethiopic than they have in Arabic. Nevertheless, the latter language, as a whole and in nearly all particulars, stands at the head of the Semitic group in importance for grammatical study. A convincing example and testimony of this fact is the present state in which the matter of Hebrew syntax stands. A satisfactory exposition of syntax is now the great desideratum of Hebrew philology, and has been for many years. Many grammarians have promised us a syntax, and no one has attempted to furnish one that goes beyond the rudiments. We think the reason for this is that, upon investigation, it is found that such a syntax, if it is to be thoroughly scientific, must be based upon a thorough knowledge of Arabic syntax, in which have found expression those methods of Semitic thought which are latent, or appear only in embryo, in Hebrew; and that such an understanding of Arabic syntax is only possible after a thorough study of the native Arabic grammarians. We doubt whether, under the circumstances, it will be possible in this generation for one scholar to cover this ground alone, and write a complete syntax. This is really more than a life's work. What the interests of the science demand are special investigations of the different elements of syntax, something on the plan of Driver's treatise on

* AN ARABIC MANUAL. By J. G. Lansing, D. D., Gardner A. Sage Professor of Old Testament Languages and Exegesis in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church at New Brunswick, N. J. Chicago: American Publication Society of Hebrew. 1886. Pp. xviii, 194. Price, \$2.00.